



Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS)

BASICS

Points To Remember About Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS)

- HS is a skin disease that causes pimple-like bumps or boils on and under the skin.
- HS does not spread from one person to another.
- Doctors do not know the exact cause of hidradenitis suppurativa.
- A dermatologist or your family doctor may treat HS with medications, surgery, and laser hair removal.
- Joining a support group or seeing a counselor helps some people with HS cope with the disease.

What is hidradenitis suppurativa?

Hidradenitis suppurativa is a skin disease that causes pimple-like bumps or boils on and under the skin. The disease is chronic (long lasting) and can be painful. HS does not spread from one person to another.

HS starts in the hair follicle in the skin and happens where areas of skin may touch or rub together. Poor personal hygiene habits, such as not bathing or shampooing your hair, do *not* cause HS. In most cases, the cause of the disease is unknown.

Who gets hidradenitis suppurativa?

Women are more likely to get hidradenitis suppurativa than men, and it is more common in African Americans than whites. HS often appears around puberty.

You may be more likely to get HS if:

- A family member has the disease.
- You are overweight or obese.
- You smoke.

What are the symptoms of hidradenitis suppurativa?

HS tends to happen where two areas of the skin touch or rub together. The symptoms of hidradenitis suppurativa are:

- Pus-filled bumps on the skin.
- Hard bumps under the skin.
- Open wounds that drain and won't heal.

The bumps usually show up in the same place on both sides of the body and can be large and painful. The most common places for the symptoms to appear are in the armpits and groin. HS can cause deep and serious scars.

Some people have mild symptoms, while others may have severe symptoms. For instance, some people only have one affected area while others have several affected areas.

What causes hidradenitis suppurativa?

Doctors do not know the exact cause of hidradenitis suppurativa. Researchers continue to study HS and think the following may lead to the disease:

- Altered or changed genes from parents.
- Hormones.
- Environmental factors.

HS does not spread from person to person, and poor personal hygiene habits, such as not bathing and shampooing your hair, do *not* cause the disease.

Is there a test for hidradenitis suppurativa?

Doctors diagnose hidradenitis suppurativa by looking at the skin for boils and bumps in certain places. Sometimes, doctors order lab tests of the fluid from the bumps to rule out other diseases or conditions.

How is hidradenitis suppurativa treated?

The treatment of hidradenitis suppurativa varies and is based on your symptoms. Doctors may treat moderate or severe HS with a TNF inhibitor, which is a medication known as a biologic. Other medications to treat the symptoms may include:

- Antibiotics.

- Corticosteroids.
- Hormone therapy.
- Immunosuppressants.
- Pain relievers.
- Retinoids.

Sometimes surgery is needed to open or drain the bumps or boils. Your doctor may recommend laser hair removal.

The goal of your treatment is to help heal current outbreaks and to stop more symptoms from developing.

Who treats hidradenitis suppurativa?

Health care professionals such as a family doctor, internist, or pediatrician treat hidradenitis suppurativa. Depending on your symptoms, your primary care doctor may refer you to a dermatologist, a specialist who is trained to diagnose and treat diseases of the skin.

Living with hidradenitis suppurativa

Living with HS can be hard. The disease can be painful, and some people find the bumps and boils embarrassing. However, treatment and the following tips can help you improve your quality of life.

- Keep affected areas clean, using ordinary soaps and antiseptics.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Quit smoking.
- Wear comfortable clothes.
- Use warm compresses.
- Ask your doctor if bleach baths are right for you.

You may find it hard to cope with the pain and scarring of HS. It may be helpful to join a support group or talk with a counselor. In addition, yoga and meditation may help improve your quality of life.

For more info

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Website: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov>

Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center

Website: <https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA

Website: <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

American Academy of Dermatology

Website: <https://www.aad.org>

National Organization for Rare Disorders

Website: <https://rarediseases.org>

Hidradenitis Suppurativa Foundation, Inc.

Website: <https://www.hs-foundation.org>

Hope for HS

Website: <https://hopeforhs.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov.

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)